

## Count to Twenty by [uniquestream](#)

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Billy's mind is an interesting place, M/M

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**Characters:** Billy Hargrove, Steve Harrington

**Relationships:** Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington

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**Warnings:** Graphic Depictions Of Violence

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**Summary:**

Billy in his car. Steve on the outside. A moment.

## Count to Twenty

### Author's Note:

English isn't my first language, so I apologize for any mistakes!

Your car is loud. You turn it off. Your hair feels scratchy at the back of your neck. You want it like that. Sometimes you imagine that roughness to be like barbwire around your face, hurting you but hurting others, too. It's one of the more silly thoughts you have.

Your car's windows need a wash. You try to focus on the specks of ambiguous dirt on the glass, but you're instantly distracted by a familiar movement behind it.

His jeans are tight, his skin looks flushed. His backpack's slumped over one lithe shoulder, there's a tense curve to his neck that hasn't been there at the beginning of term. You've seen him looking around more often these days, sometimes twitching at unexpected noises. You smoke a lot and you don't get the whole reading thing, which gives you time to watch people between classes, that's all. Gives you time to get lost in the dissonance of an ashy taste in your mouth and an ex-king's way too bright sweater.

He sees you, finally. He always does, at some point. Every day, Monday till Friday. You see brown eyes skittering away from you again immediately, tumbling aimlessly over the schoolyard. There's so much tension in his face, it's not the most flattering of moments. And yet an irritatingly haunting one, as you will discover at night, when you wake up from flickering dreams, the image of his gaze avoiding your face still burning right behind your eyes, and your heart feels as swollen and bruised as your jaw does most nights when your dad's team lost another game.

You don't have the courage to move your head and try to catch Steve Harrington's gaze with yours. You don't have the courage to look at his hair. It might look soft, and you don't want to see that. You don't have the courage to get out of your car, keep your steps steady and quiet, and lay your hand on his shoulder. He would turn around,

surprised and irritated. Scared. Never backing down though, he would try so hard to plant his feet firmly on the ground. Your fingers feel heavy with want.

They've felt heavy some weeks ago, too. Torn-up knuckles, a mixing palette for two people's blood. You know you would have killed him. You know you almost did. You've wretched over the toilet for hours after you had woken from your narcotic-induced sleep. A side effect of said narcotic, maybe. Probably. Days and days later, it usually only happens anymore when you look at your hands for too long and think of Harrington's cheekbones. It's surprisingly easy to get used to carrying around mouthwash with you at all times.

What's less easy is to keep remembering to listen really carefully to the voice of your elementary school teacher at the very back of your head. It's not like they didn't notice that your behavior differed. Differed from basically every child they had ever encountered outside of abstract examples in college class. You can still hear her, intonation and all, even though you've long forgotten her name. "Billy, do you feel angry right now?" You don't know if you had answered her. Probably not. "Whenever you feel like that I want you to count to twenty very slowly, just as we practiced last year. Either silently or out loud, it doesn't matter what other people might think of that. If you still feel angry after you've reached twenty, try counting backwards. Alright, Billy? You think you can manage that?" You've never tried that bullshit, you never feel present enough when you.. when you get like that.

You think of redness. Different kinds. About how easily Harrington fell after your first shove. About how he got back up again to beat the shit out of you for as long as he could. About a lot of different colors, really. Brown, mostly. Brown like dried-up blood, brown like farrah fawcett hair, brown like a pair of stupid wide eyes that don't look into yours anymore if they can avoid it.

You think of does and their breakable necks. You breathe out. You close your eyes and start counting to twenty.